

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Submission

Kevin Crittenden

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:11-17).

As I write these words, it seems like the message found in 1 Peter has been sadly lost. The great question that Peter was addressing to the scattered saints in what is now Turkey was this: "How are we supposed to live as godly people in a pagan society?" Peter's answer is:

- Verse 11: "abstain from sinful desires."
- Verse 12: "live good lives."

Gracious Christian living means that we will display our faith in the way we live. And so we meet together to encourage each other within the faith and remind each other of what we should abstain from and what it means to live a godly life. As part of that life, Peter tells Christians to submit to the governing authorities.

And yet the Bible seems to sanction disobedience at times:

- The Egyptian midwives defied Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15-21).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's statue (Daniel 3:12).
- Daniel continued to pray to the Most High (Daniel 6:10).
- Peter and John continued to preach in Jesus' name (Acts 4:18).

Certainly, we might think that Peter SHOULD be advocating disobedience in the name of social justice. If slavery, for instance, should be reinstated, then we might feel obligated to fight against it out of our sense of compassion. After all, compassion is a vital part of the Christian life, as exemplified by Jesus.

However, there's no hint in Peter's text of anything advocating disobedience. He doesn't tell the free men and women in his audience to disobey the laws they don't like. Instead, Peter emphasizes *obedience* -- an obedience that extends even to times when the ruling authorities are acting in what we think is an ungodly manner. And Peter tells us in 2:13 to submit. Period. No matter WHICH political party is in control. Even if we don't like it.

Yet, Peter doesn't see it like that. As an apostle, he understands that the good and honorable work of the Christian community *consists of* submission to authority. So he is trying to get us around to his understanding, and it's an uphill slog.

Now, Peter *appears* to be arguing that unquestioned submission to authority is the preeminent mark of Christian grace and goodness. But is this really true? Is this Peter's point? Does the sum and substance of our Christian life — our good works as seen by the world — come down to some blind adherence to the principle of submission?

The answer, of course, is no. Simple, blind adherence is **not** what is desired. "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, *leaving you an example*, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). The principle of submission is *not* our foundation. Verse 21 says submission *defines* the Christian's ways because being like the Savior *describes* the Christian's goal. The verses in 1 Peter 2:22-25 accentuate the meekness and *submissiveness* of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are to be like Him. Peter exhorts us to be like Christ. That is his instruction.

I think that one of the hardest steps in becoming a Christian is to voluntarily and gladly enter the waters of baptism and emerge dressed in the white garments of submission. We earnestly and honestly submit to Christ out of love for the One

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with Whom we now have a relationship.

As a young man, Peter brought a sword to the garden, fully prepared to resist authority. And he did so, cutting off the ear of a soldier. Now more mature, Peter says: "I have put that sword away." God has given a sword to the state, but, except for the sword of the Spirit (**Ephesians 6:17**), the church is to keep hers sheathed. For Peter, preaching now from the Bible was enough. It cuts more deeply to those who are the harshest in authority. Peter has learned his lesson. He is now free to submit. As he writes in **1 Peter 2:16-17**: true freedom is for serving.

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What are You Saying?

Dan Huff

Our words are powerful! They can tear souls down, they can destroy the closest of friendships, they can dishearten, and they can and do cause wars. Our words can build souls up, they can encourage and strengthen friendships, they can be healing, and they can prevent wars. Our words are real, and they have meaning. Think about what you are saying.

Words are the blocks to the foundation of life. We teach our little children not to throw fits to get what they want, but to use their words to communicate. Often, they are using what comes naturally — allowing their emotions to get the best of them or using their emotions in an attempt to communicate. Sometimes we adults let our emotions dictate the words we use. This is not always good. God, through His wisdom, has much to teach about the words we choose to use.

"A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). This is an obvious truth; but often it is so hard for us to implement in our lives. Calm, choice words can heal a broken spirit, give encouragement, and strengthen the trodden down. *"The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness" (Proverbs 15:2).*

If we think more about our words and how they will be received, we can prevent a lot of misunderstandings and hurt. As my mother would say, "This is one reason why God gave us two ears and one mouth. Therefore we ought to listen twice as much as we speak."

Paul said, *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with*

salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). Our words should be with grace, goodness, favor, and be beneficial to those who are listening. Salt has several uses. Salt can be healing. Often it is used to enhance the flavor of food, and it can be used to melt ice. The word of God has the power to melt hearts of ice, it has the power to heal, and it can enhance the flavor of anyone's life if we will allow it (**Hebrews 4:12; Romans 10:17, 1:16-17; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Someone once said, "choose your words carefully, for you might have to eat them." As God's people, we must use our words for good!

Texting language is often just acronyms that abbreviate words. Often, when I am receiving texts from those of the world, they take God's name in vain in their text language or acronyms, or they abbreviate crass words that should not be spoken or written. These acronyms can leak into our lives, and Christians might even use them, not knowing they are taking God's name in vain. Our words have meaning. What are you saying?

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:16-17).

"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37).

The Pharisees had just unwisely spoken against the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed their words were not those of good men. Jesus says the source of our words comes from our hearts. We need to be careful what we allow into our hearts and minds—for those seeds will germinate and take root, and eventually, the fruit will come out of our mouths. We also need to be careful of idle words—useless, thoughtless words that do not accomplish good and God's purpose.

Peter made the good confession using his words, pointing us to the One Whose words really matter.

His words should be our focus, His words should be on our lips, His words should be our practice. His words shall stand through time and eternity (**Matthew 24:35**)! Jesus Christ has the words that will lead us to and give eternal life!

But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

What are you saying?

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Jesus Wept

Trent Fiorentin

As many of you may already know, my wife Leah and I have recently suffered some severe loss. On November 30, 2023, we lost our son, Andrew James, at 16 weeks gestation. Then again on July 2, 2024, we lost our daughter, Quincy Kay, at 20 weeks gestation. There were many thoughts that followed both deaths, and one of the main ones that kept popping up was, "Does Jesus care?"

Does Jesus care when we are having difficult times? Does Jesus care when we have suffered great loss? Does Jesus care when I seem to be at the end of my rope?

He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted (Isaiah 53:3-4).

We are clearly told by the prophet Isaiah that the Messiah will be a man of sorrows; he will be acquainted with grief and will carry our sorrows. During his time on earth, Jesus was a human, just like any of the rest of us. He had to deal with the same troubles that we do. He had to experience pain, stress, loss, anger, hunger, sadness, rejection, and ultimately death. We are not told anything about Jesus' life from the age of twelve to the beginning of his ministry at his baptism by John. There are theories that Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, died sometime during that time, as he is not mentioned during Jesus' ministry. If that is the case, then Jesus had to deal with a great earthly loss. He had to deal with grief just like you and me.

We are told of two times in the Bible when Jesus had to deal with the death of someone he was close to and loved here on earth. The first is the death of his cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist. As we know, John was beheaded by Herod the

Tetrarch. Picking up the story in **Matthew 14:12-13**,

Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed him on foot from the cities.

When Jesus heard of his cousin's death, he receded alone to a deserted place for the purpose of mourning.

The better-known story of Jesus' mourning and suffering loss is that of the death of his good friend Lazarus, found in **John 11**. We are told in **verse 5** that, "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*" Jesus arrived in Bethany four days after Lazarus died and met with his sisters. Let's pick up the story in **verse 32**,

Then when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept (John 11:32-35).

Think about the last verse: "Jesus wept." Jesus felt loss. Jesus felt grief. Jesus felt overwhelming sadness. He was truly a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." Because of his life here on earth and the emotions and troubles that he had to go through, we are told in **Hebrews 4:15**, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*"

Does Jesus care? As song number 485 in *Sacred Selections* so emphatically replies to this question, "O, yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief." Jesus cares deeply about me and you. He has experienced life and all the pain and disappointment that comes with it, and because of this, He can sympathize with us. He knows how hard it is.

When we are facing difficult times — whether they be the death of a loved one, temptation, physical turmoil, or any other thing that makes us question whether Jesus cares — we can remember back to the scriptures and His life and know that He cares for us and about what we are going through. Because He cares for us, we need to reach out to him when we are in difficult times.

"...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

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Please check your expiration date!

Blessed Are the Dead

Ruth Marie Hermon, 92, Olathe, KS, passed away on September 17, 2024. Ruth was born on June 15, 1932, the only child of **Jesse and Bessie (Epperson) Frazier** in Olathe, KS. She married **Dale Hermon** on November 30, 1952, at the Mahaffie House in Olathe, where she lived with her parents. Ruth and Dale were baptized the same day, and she was a member of the **Church of Christ in Gardner** for 79 years. She was a homemaker and farmer's wife. She volunteered as a supervising judge for Johnson County elections for many years as well as working at the crop building at the Johnson County Fair. Ruth earned her private pilot's license and was an active member for many years in the Kansas Chapter of the International Flying Farmers. Ruth enjoyed sewing, quilting and all sorts of crafts she made for her family. She was a lifelong resident of Johnson County.

Ruth was preceded in death by her parents, stepmother Bertha Meng Frazier, and husband Dale of 61 years. She is survived by her children **Don (Diana) Hermon**, Olathe, KS, **Jim (Michel) Hermon**, Edgerton, KS; and **Glenn (Pam) Hermon**, Spring Hill, KS; seven grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Special Meetings

Please encourage our young people to attend the winter rallies held in the Kansas City area.

The flyer for the annual **Youth Rally** hosted by the **Gregory Boulevard Church of Christ** in **Raytown, MO**, can be found at the QR link to the right.



For more information about the **College Rally** hosted by the **Lone Jack Church of Christ**, please navigate to the church's website using the QR code to the left.

2024 Meetings

December 26-28.... Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd. Raytown, MO

December 26-28.....College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

Here and There

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